

Guide for Recommenders

Stanford GSE applicants are required to submit a minimum of three letters of recommendation when applying for admission for our program. Below, we provide some guidelines as to what our faculty are seeking in a recommendation, the process for submitting letters in support of our applicants, and general tips.

Who should write a letter of recommendation?

We ask that applicants identify letter writers who are in a position to make a strong case for them to pursue graduate study. We find that the best recommenders are people who know the applicant well and have supervised them in an academic, employment, or community service setting.

For PhD applicants, we strongly recommend that **at least two** of these letters be from a university professor familiar with their academic work.

For Master's applicants, we strongly recommend that **at least one, if not two**, of these letters be from a university professor familiar with their academic work.

Preliminary tips:

1. Decide whether or not you are the most suitable recommender for the applicant by considering whether or not you can write a **strong** letter.
2. It's okay to promptly write back with a "no" to an applicant for whom you cannot write a strong letter.
3. Consider having a conversation with the applicant before you commit to writing a letter. While the applicant cannot be involved in drafting their own letter, the applicant can share the following with you:
 1. Their resume/CV.
 2. The Statement of Purpose they are preparing for the application.
 3. A summary of their accomplishments for contextual information along with their reasons for pursuing graduate study.
 4. A complete description of the program to which they are applying.
 5. If they will waive their right to access the letter of recommendation. [See more details on the FERPA website.](#)

What does the admissions committee look for in a letter of recommendation?

Letters should directly address an applicant’s suitability for admission to the program of interest at Stanford GSE.

Our faculty are looking for PhD students whose research interests closely align with their own programs of research, a commitment to the field of education, and students with the potential to be academically successful in our program.

Our admissions committee is looking for Master’s students who have an idea of how the program will impact their career goals, a commitment to the field of education, and who have the potential to be academically successful in our program.

Tips in writing the letter:

1. Include an introduction with details on how you know the applicant and a statement of recommendation for the applicant
2. List specific reasons why you are recommending the applicant to the program
3. Provide evidence of the applicant’s qualities and qualifications, including soft and hard skills
4. Avoid cliché descriptors and platitudes when describing the applicant
5. Organize your letter chronologically or thematically
6. Ensure your contact information is within the letter

Note that the GSE Admissions Office or faculty may follow up with recommenders as needed for additional information.

What is the process for submitting the letter of recommendation?

When an applicant indicates in the admissions process that an individual is one of their three recommenders, the recommender will receive an email informing them that they have been asked to submit a recommendation on the applicant's behalf. The email will state whether or not the applicant has waived their right to view their recommendation, and will provide the recommender with instructions on how to create an account, if the recommender has never used the system before, and submit the recommendation. See the image below.

Please submit your recommendation for GSE Applicant

Stanford University <help@applyweb.com>
To: letter_writer@something.com

Fri, Oct 16, 2020 at 5:47 PM

GSE Applicant is applying for admission to graduate study at Stanford University and has chosen you to provide a letter of reference.

This applicant has waived the right to view your recommendation.

Please go to the following web address to access the recommendation system. Returning users will be greeted by name and asked to log in. New users will be prompted to create an account by choosing a password before proceeding to the recommendation form.

http://www.applyweb.com/lor_abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz12345678910

If you experience technical difficulty with the recommendation form, please follow this link to check the frequently asked questions or contact CollegeNET support:

https://www.applyweb.com/public/input?s=helprec&p=1&HELP_APP_CODE=STANGLOR

Thank you.

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The recommender will be asked to complete two components of the recommendation:

1. **A recommendation form:** This will ask recommenders to compare the applicant to other students/advisees/employees with whom they have worked, and how strongly they recommend the applicant for graduate study at Stanford GSE.
2. **A letter of recommendation:** The recommenders may type the letter into the text box provided, or they may upload a letter in the form of a Word document or PDF. We highly encourage and prefer letters uploaded as a PDF.

Stanford GSE only accepts recommendations through the online application system, and cannot accept mailed, emailed, or faxed recommendations.

Tips for completing the process:

1. Submit your letter of recommendation before the deadline to ensure that your recommendation will reach the committee before evaluations begin. We process a large number of applications and incomplete applications are at risk of not being considered by our admissions committee.
2. Send any questions to the CollegeNet/ApplyWeb HelpDesk at lor_help@collegenet.com if you experience technical difficulties. Please be sure to email the HelpDesk first as our Admissions team cannot address these technical questions related to the recommendation portal. If the HelpDesk refers you back to the department, you may email our Admissions team at gseadmissions@stanford.edu.